

**Amendments to the Claims:**

The listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings of claim in the application.

Claims 1-11 (canceled)

Claim 12. (currently amended) A surgical ink dispensing instrument for facilitating surgical tattooing of a patient, which comprises:

an ink cartridge defining an enclosed internal chamber; and

sterile tattoo ink disposed within said enclosed internal chamber of said ink cartridge; and

a surgical needle mounted to said ink cartridge;

wherein said ink cartridge is substantially flexible to permit the operator to manually deform said ink cartridge by direct engagement of said ink cartridge with a hand of the operator to dispense said tattoo ink through said port.

Claim 13. (previously presented) The surgical instrument according to claim 12 wherein said ink cartridge defines a port in communication with said internal chamber.

Claim 14. (previously presented) The surgical instrument according to claim 13 including an enclosure for covering said port of said ink cartridge.

Claim 15. (previously presented) The surgical instrument according to claim 14 wherein said enclosure is releasably mounted to said ink cartridge.

Claim 16. (previously presented) The surgical instrument according to claim 15 wherein said enclosure is an end cap, said end cap being removably mounted to said ink cartridge adjacent said port.

Claims 17-18. (cancelled)

Claim 19. (previously presented) The surgical instrument according to claim 18 wherein said surgical needle defines a lumen in communication with said port of said ink cartridge.

Claims 20-22. (canceled)

Claim 23. (New) A surgical ink dispensing instrument for facilitating surgical tattooing of a patient, which comprises:

an ink cartridge defining an enclosed internal chamber and having a port in communication with said internal chamber; and

an end cap for covering said port of said ink cartridge sterile and being releasably mounted to said ink cartridge; and

sterile tattoo ink disposed within said enclosed internal chamber of said ink cartridge;

wherein said ink cartridge is substantially flexible to permit the operator to manually deform said ink cartridge by direct engagement of said ink cartridge with a hand of the operator to dispense said tattoo ink through said port.